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Inside this Issue:

| | |
|---|---|
| Corpsmen Tested During Medical Evacuation Drill | 2 |
| SECDEF Visits Comfort | 2 |
| Final Patient Movement Aboard Comfort | 3 |
| Naval Dental Clinic Achieves Milestone: 400 th Consecutive Graduating Class with 95 Percent Operational Dental Readiness | 4 |
| Dental Training, Services Provided to Guyana | 4 |
| The Miracle of Pet Therapy at NMC Portsmouth | 5 |

Items of Interest:

- **Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Charles Luke Milam**, 26, of Littleton, Colo., died Sept. 25, while conducting combat operations in Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Milam was a hospital corpsman assigned to 2nd Marine Special Operations Battalion, Camp Lejeune, N.C.
- **Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Mark R. Cannon**, 31, of Lubbock, Texas died Oct. 2 while conducting combat operations in Kunar Province, Afghanistan. Cannon was a hospital corpsman assigned to 3rd Marine Regiment, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

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New Navy Surgeon General Puts Patients, Families First

By David Mays, Special to American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – Patients, not process, must always come first, the Navy's surgeon general said Oct. 3.

"If I can keep my eye on the ball -- and that is healthcare, people, patients, families -- then I can always get the administrative or the process problems cared for and done," Vice Adm. Adam M. Robinson Jr. told online journalists and "bloggers" yesterday during a conference call from National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

Robinson, who commanded the Bethesda facility before he was pro-

moted to oversee all of Navy medicine about a month ago, said he is committed to knocking down bureaucratic barriers that may get in the way of medical care.

"We can never lose sight of the fact that we take care of patients," he said. "We need to provide care for patients."

That care must be world class, he said, whether it is delivered in stateside military medical facilities or on the front lines.

"Force health protection is a fit and ready force," Robinson explained. "It's to deploy with the war fighters. It's there to care for the

(Continued on page 3)



PARA, Suriname - Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Sandra Rodriguez-Romero and Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Mark Andrews, both attached to Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20), give a patient a pair of eye glasses at the Zanderij Clinic Oct. 3.
U.S. Navy photo by Lt. John Fage

Corpsmen Tested During Medical Evacuation Drill

By Lance Cpl. Corey A. Blodgett,
Marine Corps Base Camp Butler

YASUBETSU TRAINING AREA, HOKKAIDO, Japan - As Marines and sailors with 3rd Battalion, 12th Marines completed final preparations for artillery and small arms live-fire training here, the battalion's medical personnel readied their battalion aid station team with a medical evacuation drill Sept. 15.

The response drill is a requirement before live fire training and allows the battalion's medical team to evaluate the efficiency of its personnel, said Petty Officer 3rd Class Dustin B. Jones, the head instructor during the training.

"During live-fire missions, medical evacuation training is required to find out how smooth things are going to go and how fast we can get things done," Jones said. "Because we've got some junior corpsmen with us, it's also served as a way to train them up on what to do when nobody else is around

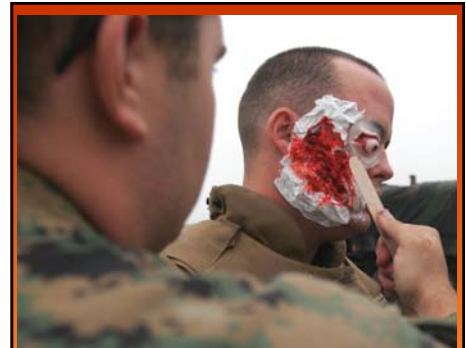
except for them."

The scenario had corpsmen, with assistance from Marines who had completed the combat lifesavers course, respond to a seven-ton truck roll-over that caused several casualties.

"We had the medical personnel respond to injuries such as blunt chest trauma, arterial cuts, broken bones and heat casualties," Jones said. "The corpsmen had to basically do everything they're taught in school: assess the situation, establish who's critical, who needs to be treated right away, and who needs to be evacuated."

Jones said everything was done to make the scenario as realistic as possible.

Throughout the drill, the casualty role players were encouraged to yell in pain and, at times, be uncooperative toward the corpsmen and Marines, he said. The casualties' behavior, along with the application of gory make-up and fake blood to simulate actual injuries,



YASUBETSU TRAINING AREA, HOKKAIDO, Japan — Realistic makeup is used to simulate a casualty during a medical evacuation drill conducted by Marines and sailors with 3rd Battalion, 12th Marines at Yausubetsu Training Area in Hokkaido, Japan, Sept. 15. *U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Corey A. Blodgett*

added essential chaos to the training.

"Breaking out the (make-up) kit and putting it on the casualties

(Continued page 4)

SECDEF Visits Comfort

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Kelly E. Barnes, USNS Comfort Public Affairs

ATLANTIC OCEAN - U.S. Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) Robert M. Gates toured hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) Oct. 6 during the ship's humanitarian mission to Paramaribo, Suriname and surrounding areas.

Gates was accompanied by Suriname Minister of Defense Ivan Fernald, U.S. Ambassador to Suriname Lisa Bobbie Schreiber Hughes, and Surinamese and U.S. governmental and military officials.

Gates said he's very impressed with the efforts of the Comfort crew.

"This mission has created a lot of good will between all of our countries," Gates said. "It's really awesome what you guys do."

For the tour, Gates visited Comfort's casualty and receiving area, the operating rooms, the dental department, a patient ward, the intensive care unit where patients recover after surgery, and the ship's bio-medical repair department.

"I really want to thank everyone who's served on the Comfort — you've made a huge impact on every place you've gone," Gates said. "You've helped a lot of different people in a lot of different ways. Thank you for your service."

Capt. Bob Kapcio, Comfort's mission commander,



ATLANTIC OCEAN — Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates meets a USNS Comfort (T-AH-20) crew member during a tour of the ship Oct. 6. *U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communications Specialist 2nd Class Steven King*

said having both Gates and Fernald aboard Comfort at the same time was an honor that demonstrates the purpose of Comfort's mission.

"We are here to build bridges and to make lasting, steadfast friends throughout the Americas," Kapcio said. "We are honored to work alongside our Surinamese hosts to provide cooperative care here, and we are happy to have the opportunity to show Secretary Gates the work we're doing."

During the tour, Gates shook hands and spoke with crew members about the importance of their mission. He said he was excited for the opportunity to tour Comfort and talk with and see first-hand the joint-force team that's helped change lives in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Comfort is concluding its four-month humanitarian deployment to a dozen countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with this final country visit to Suriname.

Final Patient Movement Aboard Comfort

By Mass Communication Specialist
2nd Class Elizabeth R. Allen, USNS
Comfort Public Affairs

ATLANTIC OCEAN - Comfort's last group of 11 patients, escorts and translators were assisted to an MH-60S helicopter the morning of Oct. 7 after receiving medical care aboard hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20), as their stay on the ship ended and they returned to the shores of Suriname.

"I had a good experience," said Claudia Hardjopawiro, a patient who had a cyst removed from her arm. "The best part of my time aboard the ship? Everything!"

Patients came to Comfort by helicopter to receive medical advice and treatment by military and civilian health care professionals. Their stay aboard Comfort began when they checked in at the casualty and receiving (CASREC) area of the ship, which is also where they checked out when their stay was finished.

They stayed overnight if necessary in the pre-operation ward, the Comfort Inn, and in the recovery wards following their surgeries. Children received toys, and all patients received postcard mementos with their photo on them to remember their stay.

"There's a bit of sadness now that it's coming to an end," said Lt.j.g. Matthew Deshazo, who primarily worked in CASREC aboard Comfort. "There was a lot of hard work done by the crew, and everyone was so engaged in the mission, but it's time to move on to the next chapter."

Comfort's medical crew provided care that included examinations, computer axio-tomography scans, X-rays, and surgeries for patients ranging in age from infants to the elderly. From Belize to Suriname, the crew of Comfort has kept busy, and will have great memories for years to come.

"When patients were leaving the ship after receiving medical care,

the expressions of gratitude on their faces were some of the most memorable moments of this deployment," Deshazo said.

The members of Comfort's crew who worked closest with the patients received more than just medical and technical education while on the deployment.

"I learned so much about the different cultures of Latin America and the Caribbean," said Hospitalman Dustin Getz, who also worked in CASREC. "I don't speak Spanish, and a lot of the countries we visited were Spanish-speaking countries. I had to work with translators or my co-workers to understand patients."

The ship is now on its way to Norfolk. Comfort will then continue to its layberth in Baltimore, Md., to undergo repairs, general upkeep and maintenance.

"We have accomplished a lot in the last four months and it feels pretty good," said Hospitalman Wesley Williams, who worked in CASREC.

Surgeon General continued...

(Continued from page 1)

warfighters no matter what that care may be."

Besides treating trauma cases such as service members wounded in combat, deployed military health care personnel are providing preventative medicine, obstetrics and gynecological treatment, pediatric infectious disease diagnosis, and other services, the admiral said. "There could be a variety of things that we may need to do at any given time," he said.

Providing medical services to veterans is also a top priority, the admiral said. "It is our honor and privilege, and it is our duty to care for them," he said.

One facility that has famously cared for millions of service members, veterans, and military families is Walter Reed Army Medical Center in the nation's capital. It is mandated to close in 2011 under the Base Realignment and Closure law, as is the National Naval Medical Center. A new facility to be built on the Bethesda campus will be known as the National Military Medical Center and will be staffed by Army, Navy, and Air Force personnel.

"It takes more than any one single service to get the job done," Robinson said, noting that many military medical missions, such as the USNS Comfort, are already jointly staffed.

There's been major progress toward the new medical center in the past few weeks, the admiral explained,

such as the standing up a joint task force to oversee the project. "There's now a unity of command that exists," he said.

Everyday health care, such as making medical appointments and filling prescriptions, is also important, the admiral said. To that end, the military is making an extra effort to recruit and retain key medical positions by offering attractive incentives such as bonuses. "In the military, we talk about recruiting an individual, and retaining a family," Robinson said. "That's important."

Professional development and personal enrichment are both required to keep talented medical personnel motivated to serve in the military on a long term basis. Even so, many staffers leave, he said, after their initial enlistment.

"I think part of that is because of the war," Robinson said. "But I think most of that is because they don't see career paths that are open to them on the military side."

Fixing career-path problems is a top priority, the admiral said, but caring for service members wounded in war is an even more urgent mission. "Once you're wounded, I can never guarantee you'll get back to the same," Robinson said. "But I can try my darnedest to make sure that you are as good as you can possibly be and then get you back into your communities so that you can become a productive, vibrant part of that community and help the United States understand exactly what the cost of freedom really is from a very personal point of view."

Naval Dental Clinic Achieves Milestone: 400th Consecutive Graduating Class with 95 Percent Operational Dental Readiness

By Sonja Hanson, Naval Medical Center San Diego Public Affairs Office

SAN DIEGO - Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS D) is proud to recognize the U.S. Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego (MCRD) Branch Dental Clinic for setting a high standard and providing the finest comprehensive dental care to our newest service members. MCRD's D company will be the 400th consecutive class to graduate with better than 95 percent operational dental readiness on Friday morning, Oct. 5, 2007.

"This is an incredible accom-

plishment for the Navy and Marine Corps Team, NMCS D, and the Directorate for Dental Services. It is an honor to be able to provide the highest quality dental services to our newest service members," said Cmdr. Timothy Tinker, Department Head, MCRD Branch Dental Clinic.

MCRD Dental Clinic is part of the Directorate for Dental Services and has a staff of 25 dentists, four dental hygienists, and 80 auxiliary personnel. The clinic serves more than 1,500 patients a week and provides \$20 million worth of dental services annually.

Media are invited to attend the graduation, acquire b-roll or photo-

graphs, and conduct interviews with dental clinic staff and graduating recruits. Please plan to arrive at MCRD's gate two by 9:30 a.m. located at: 1600 Henderson Ave., San Diego, CA 92140-5000. MCRD is located just northwest of downtown San Diego and north of the San Diego International Airport, Lindbergh Field. Escorts and parking will be provided.

Media must RSVP by contacting Sonja Hanson, NMCS D Public Affairs Officer, at (619) 719-2248 or Sonja.Hanson@med.navy.mil no later than Oct. 5 at 8a.m. to coordinate base access and parking.

Corpsmen Tested continued...

(Continued from page 2)

helped out the corpsmen a lot," Jones said. "They can actually see the wounds. It improves the training because a lot of times with drills like this, instructors are just saying, 'Hey, this person has wounds here.' It definitely added realism to the training."

Lt. Cmdr. Gregg J. Montalto, the regimental surgeon

with 12th Marines, said that although he saw room for improvement, he was satisfied with the results of the drill.

"We picked out a lot of things that we can fix immediately. For example, we had some radio issues that probably set us back 20 minutes, but we solved the problem out in the field and if it happens tomorrow in a real situation, we will save an extra 20 minutes."

Dental Training, Services Provided to Guyana

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Kelly E. Barnes, USNS Comfort Public Affairs

GEORGETOWN, Guyana - Doctors attached to hospital ship USNS Comfort (T-AH 20) shared their knowledge in the field of dentistry to practicing local dentists at Cheddi Jagan Dental Centre in Georgetown Sept. 28.

Topics discussed included Comfort's dental capabilities, the dental equipment the Comfort team uses in the field, protocol for managing patients highly susceptible to tooth decay, and detection, diagnosis and treatment of oral pathology covered by U.S. Navy Capt. Joseph Rusz, general dentist, Cmdr. Charles Ellis, oral surgeon, and U.S. Public Health Service Capt. Renee Joskow, dentist and epidemiologist.

"It was a really nice review and it was interesting to see the different pathologies," said Jennifer Bulkan, a dentist at Cheddi Jagan. "We don't get much opportunity for continuing education."

By providing continuing education for the registered dentists of Guyana, Rusz, Ellis, and Joskow helped raise awareness that can potentially save the lives of the den-

tal patients of Guyana.

"One of the goals of public health is early diagnosis," Joskow said. "By teaching them all these different skills, they can attract more people to the field. It's all about health promotion and disease prevention."

Joskow taught dental assistants, community dental therapists, dental technicians, and dental students in a class at Cheddi Jagan the day before she lectured with Ellis and Rusz.

"We brought new terms here that we use back home as second nature," Joskow said. "This is a really good opportunity for education here."

Rusz, Ellis, and other members of Comfort's dental crew brought their services to Cheddi Jagan, Sept. 29, where the two countries' dentistry specialists will work together for the people of Guyana.

Comfort will remain in Georgetown until completing its four-month humanitarian deployment to countries in Latin America and the Caribbean with a final visit to Suriname.

The Miracle of Pet Therapy at NMC Portsmouth

By Jacky Fisher, Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, Va. Public Affairs Office

NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER PORTSMOUTH, Va. - Remember Oscar the cat? Or as the media dubbed him, the feline Grim Reaper, who resides in a Rhode Island Nursing home advanced dementia unit? Tongue in cheek humor was heaped on Oscar's furry little head most likely to cover the insecurities associated with talking about the unavoidable last walk we all will eventually take....dying.

The most striking attributes Oscar demonstrates as he curls up at the bedside of a dying patient is unconditional love and silent compassion that, though unnoticed by the patient, is greatly appreciated by the family members.

The miracle pill of Pet Therapy is available at Naval Medical Center Portsmouth (NMCP) and at least once a week Molly and her wagging tail can be seen making rounds as one of two pet therapy dogs.

Molly is a three year old Cavalier King Charles Spaniel who is dual-certified as a Canine Good Citizen through the American Kennel Club and a Therapy dog through Therapy Dogs International.

Cmdr. Deborah Roy, an NMCP Intensive Care Nurse, is both Molly's handler and owner and accompanies Molly making her rounds. "I like to take her to the in-patient ward where she can see the most patients." But first, Molly must make a few pit stops before tending to her patients.

"Sometimes we need to make a quick round to the medical staff before we see the patients," says Roy. "Everyone benefits from Pet Therapy."

Other than those with animal allergies, or patients with impaired immune systems, or who are under any type of precautions, the benefits of Pet Therapy are almost limitless.

"Even an unconscious stroke victim has responded to the soft fur of an animal being placed under their hand," said Roy.

According to Roy it is hard to measure the impact on an unconscious patient. "But the positive impact on the patient's family just to have their loved ones' presence validated despite their debilitating condition is priceless."

NMCP has had a visitation Pet Therapy program for more than eight years. Although other animals such as Guinea pigs, chickens and donkeys are suited for this type of patient therapy, NMCP's program has gone to the dogs. However cats are welcome to join in, too. They just need a suitable, clean carrier for transporting.

The program is self-contained, but Molly pulls double duty as she also makes weekend rounds at Suffolk's Obici Hospital.

Molly usually works solo when she is on call at NMCP bringing smiles to the faces of anyone with whom she encounters. But at Obici she's joined by her canine buddies, Buzz and Jasmine. This gives patients an opportunity to choose from a dog who best suits their needs, preference, and comfort level.

"Handlers are aware that some people are scared of large dogs (Buzz is a Golden Retriever, Jasmine a Collie) and some may be very comfortable with a larger breed," says Roy. "It's all about the patient's comfort level."

Regardless of her worksite, when Molly's on the job, she has on her doggy game face. "She knows



NAVAL MEDICAL CENTER

PORTSMOUTH, Va. - A pediatric patient reaches out to Molly for a soft pet and a comforting nuzzle. When Molly makes her pet therapy rounds through the hospital wards, she spreads smiles across the faces of all the patients and staff. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communications Specialist Seaman James Holcroft

she's here for the patients and she loves her job," says Roy.

Cameron Clark, staff member in NMCP's Psychiatry Department, heads the Pet Therapy program.

"The hardest part about getting your dog qualified as a pet therapy dog is the wait time for the health care check at the military veterinarian office at Naval Station Norfolk," said Clark.

Despite Molly's two separate certifications, a Veterinary Health Certificate (DD Form 2209) from the DoD Vets is all that is required to get your pet in the program.

"A dog will undergo a temperament test just to see how he or she will react to loud noises or a crowd of people," says Clark. "But the only documentation required by DoD installations is the DD Form 2209."

Unfortunately, Molly will be moving to Florida when Roy departs in a month. With her pending departure, Molly will leave some big paw prints to be filled. To get involved with Pet Therapy at NMCP, call 953-4069 or 953-4928 for information.



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